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Casey Holds Some High Cards, but He Also I

After Bobby Inman Whither the C. I.

By PHILIP TAUBMAN

WASHINGTON — According to the current incumbent, William J. Casey, to be successful the Director of Central Intelligence must maintain good relations with four groups: his own staff, Congressional oversight committees, senior government officials who receive intelligence data and friendly foreign intelligence services. By that measure, Mr. Casey said recently, his own performance should be considered good.

His assessment will probably soon be put to the test in the wake of last week's surprise announcement by the White House that Adm. Bobby R. Inman, the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence, plans to quit later this year to go into private business. A number of senior government officials believe that Admiral Inman's expertise and eloquence have diverted attention from trouble in the agency and kept his boss from looking bad. "I'll tell you one thing," said Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware and a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, "The wrong guy is leaving."

Associates of Admiral Inman, challenging the official explanation, said the resignation was prompted by a series of clashes with the White House and mounting frustration over the direction of the Administration's policies.

There is a general consensus in the intelligence community that Admiral Inman, who watched over electronic intelligence collection, has played a crucial role in the day-to-day management of the agency and in dealings with the outside world. Mr. Casey, who received his intelligence baptism running American agents behind German lines in World War II, concentrated on rebuilding the agency's clandestine operations division and oversaw the preparation of national intelligence estimates.

In several major intelligence policy debates, including the drafting of an executive order governing the activities of intelligence agencies, Mr. Inman advocated positions that were often sharply at variance with the views of Mr. Casey and other senior national security officials. He fought, for example, to maintain the controls on domestic intelligence gathering that had been imposed by Presidents Ford and Carter.

Despite his reputation as a comparative dove, Admiral Inman was called upon by the White



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Admiral Bobby R. Inman

House last month to present the Administration's case to the public about Soviet and Cuban interference in Central America. When the House or Senate intelligence committees demanded information, it was usually Admiral Inman who briefed the members in a precise, satisfying style. Mr. Casey, by contrast, infuriated the Congressmen with answers they considered imprecise and evasive. In a press conference Friday, Senator Richard G. Lugar, Republican of Indiana and a member of the intelligence panel, complained that Mr. Casey still doesn't know the ins and out of his agency's operations, maintaining that "there are complexities that would take more years to understand than Casey will be alive."

Mr. Casey's relations with the committee were further poisoned by its investigation last year into his personal financial dealings and the demand of several senators, including chairman Barry M. Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, that he resign. The committee eventually concluded that Mr. Casey was "not unfit" to serve as the agency's director.

Fears of Politicization

Mr. Inman's departure will likely magnify some of Mr. Casey's problems. For one thing, Mr. Casey cannot shake his image as something of a wheeler-dealer, and critics such as Senator Biden fear that he will plunge the agency into swash-buckling overseas operations that may not be carefully planned.

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